DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 030 876 AL 002 012

By-Paulston, Christina Bratt

Las Escuelas Bilingues: The Peruvian Experience (Bilingual Schools: The Peruvian Experience).

Pub Date 7 Mar 69

Note-14p.; Paper presented at the Third Annual TESOL Convention, Chicago, Illinois, March, 1969.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.80

Descriptors-American Indian Culture, *American Indians, *Bilingual Education, *Bilingual Schools, Cultural Differences, Cultural Pluralism, *English (Second Language), Latin American Culture, Non English Speaking, Quechua, Religious Education, Religious Organizations, *Rural Schools, Social Class, Sociocultural Patterns, Spanish, Subculture

Identifiers-Peru, Summer Institute Of Linguistics

The Summer Institute of Linguistics runs several bilingual schools in the Andean and Amazonian regions of Peru. These are the only public bilingual schools in the country serving the Indian population, a majority of whom do not speak Spanish as their first language. Although public education is now available to some 80 percent of all children, the school completion rates in rural, monolingual-Spanish schools are less than ten percent. In the Summer Institute of Linguistics schools, the teacher is always bilingual and of the same tribe or region. Typically, the student first learns to read in his native language while studying Spanish orally. After learning to read Spanish as well, the student transfers to the second grade of a monolingual-Spanish school. Evaluation of the efficiency of bilingual schools depends on the criteria used (religious, political, social) and the evaluators (missionaries, government officials, teachers). Objective evaluation is also hampered by the lack of local or national statistics. Preliminary findings based on the achievement of children from bilingual schools transferring to monolingual schools indicates that they have a higher rate of achievement. The author concludes that foreign language learning and second language learning may be much more dissimilar psychological experiences than we have previously supposed them to be. Further interdisciplinary research and cooperation is essential. (JD)

ED030870

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

LAS ESCUELAS BILINGÜES:

THE PERUVIAN EXPERIENCE

by

Christina Bratt Paulston

Paper read at the National TESOL Convention

Chicago, Illinois

March 7, 1969

NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION

A L 002 012

If the title of my paper, "The Bilingual Schools: The Peruvian Experience," would seem to promise some definitive conculusions, I hasten to make clear that I am reporting on the problem of the relative efficiency of bilingual education in some of its aspects and the implications for TESOL, not on any final solutions.

The Summer Institute of Linguistics runs several bilingual schools in Peru. There are two centers. One is Yarinacocha in Pucallpa, the base camp which serves some thirty Amazon jungle tribes. This is a politically sensitive area as the three bordering countries of Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia still argue the exact location of the borders. Often the Indian has not heard of either country. The other center is in Ayacucho, high in the Andes, where native bilingual teachers are trained at the University of Huamanga--by an Instituto Lingüístico professor--to teach the monolingual Quechua speaking children in the 22 experimental bilingual schools of that <u>departamento</u>.

All the bilingual schools are part of the national public school system, but they are the only public bilingual schools in the country and without the work of the Instituto Lingüístico there would be no schools in parts of the high windblown Sierra and lowland Amazon basin.(2, p. 107) The role of the Instituto Lingüístico is that of interventionist, representing foreign

values, ideas, and technology. The Instituto is only one of a world-wide net of affiliates of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, whose basic objective is to spread the word of God, i.e. to make available Bible translations in the native tongue. (1, p. 2), (4, p. 1) Secondary objectives of the Summer Institute of Linguistics are frequently--as in Peru--to effect improvements in the areas of education, public health and community development. Instituto personnel operate in primitive areas with a high input of motivation, of resources, and of technology--such as airplanes and radio systems--not found locally.

Although the official language of Peru is Spanish, less than half of the population speak Spanish as a first language.(11) Of the Andean Indian languages, Quechua is the most common, followed by Aymara. There are numerous stone-age tribes in the Amazon jungle basin, each with separate language and culture.

One cannot speak of Peruvian culture without careful modification: there are two cultures which in turn can be separated into many sub-groups and stratifications. But basically there are the minority of the superordinate Hispanic culture and the majority of the subordinate Indian or indigenous as it is called. However, Peruvians are racially mixed, or mestizo, which is to say that most are part or all Indian in origin. But race is not defined by caste as we tend to do, but rather by social class and culture,(7) of which language is an integral part. With starched hat, braids and long wide skirts, and a community-

centered world view expressed in Quechua, you are an Indian. But go to the city, cut off your hair and put on a miniskirt, and accept in Spanish a Latin egocentric world view, and you become mestizo. In fact, it is a very arduous but common process, usually taking one or two generations. Typically only the Indian and the upper class will admit to knowing Quechua; for the slowly growing middle class, where you find the public school teachers and the administrators, the Indian heritage is still too uncomfortably close.

Peru's educational system is highly centralized, and all major decisions emanate from the Ministerio de Educación Pública in Lima, the heart of the Hispanic coastal area that politically, culturally, and economically replaced metropolitan Spain during the revolutionary period to internally colonize the sierra and jungle areas. The medium of instruction is Spanish, and all textbooks used to teach the national curriculum are also in Spanish. Incidentally, a commonly voiced belief is that Quechua--language of the Incas--is too primitive a language to be written. The teacher, most often a mestizo, is not likely to admit that he also understands or speaks Quechua. Teachers are since 1964 relatively well paid, public education is now available to some 80 percent of all children, and the field of education represents an avenue of not inconsiderable upward social mobility. Peruvian Hispanic society is authoritative, traditional and conservative, but as is often the case in former colonies, the culture allows some upward social mobility.

In a typical rural public school in the Sierra, a Quechua child is from the first day of school taught to read, write, and count in a foreign language by a teacher who is not likely to ever speak anything but Spanish. Not surprisingly, the school completion rates for this group are less than 10 percent. The jungle tribes never had any public schools until the advent of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in the 1940's so one cannot talk of a typical school there. The Spanish-speaking children of the upper and middle classes, whose idealized culture forms the content of the public school curriculum, usually go to private schools, a situation not unlike that in many large urban areas in the United States.(9)

In contrast, in the bilingual schools of the Instituto Lingüístico, the maestro or teacher is always bilingual of the same tribe or region. The program calls for three years of bilingual schooling, upon the successful completion of which the child enters second grade where all instruction is in Spanish. Typically, the student first learns to read in his native language, which the linguist from the Instituto Lingüístico for that tribe or area has analyzed, reduced to writing, and put into primers. Concurrently the child studies Spanish orally. Only after he can read well in his own language, does he begin to read in Spanish. In arithmetic the Spanish number system is at times introduced from the beginning as some tribes have counting systems markedly different from ours. However, explanations and directions are in the native language. The teachers spend the

summer vacation months of January, February, and March in teacher training programs at the Instituto's centers in Ayacucho and Yarinacocha.(8)

What then is the problem that we as linguists and teachers can isolate and learn from observing? As teachers we might be most interested to know whether the bilingual schools are more "efficient" than their monolingual counterparts. Such a simple statement of the problem leads of course to the question "efficient at what?" or put in another way, to a consideration of the function of public education in Peru. As TESOL people we are likely to interpret the problem in terms of efficient language learning "who learns better Spanish?" but it is not likely that either the policy makers in the Ministerio de Educación, who represent the Hispanic culture of Peru's ruling class, or the missionaries of the Instituto Lingüístico see the problem in those terms.

From a study of the national public school curriculum, the schools would seem to prepare an academic elite for entry into a university. In fact it is obvious that this cannot be the case. The implicit function of the public schools has a much more important role. They are the means through which a very large and very discontented segment of the population can be brought into the mainstream of the country's life, can be acculturated into Hispanic culture with its respect for authority and tradition, for church and state and the <u>status quo</u>, i.e. its respect for the superordinate mestizo elites.

Although only some three children out of 10 who begin transición, the first year of primary, do graduate, the vast majority of dropouts have in three or four years of schooling learned (1) the rudiments of literacy and arithmetic, (2) the inferiority of the indigenous culture vis-a-vis the national Hispanic culture, and (3) the impossibility of "qualifying" for a high position because of their lack of formal education.(10)

The function of education seen from the Instituto Lingüístico's viewpoint is in its simplest form to enable the people to profit from the word of God. This they believe can most efficiently be done in the native language.(13) But the Instituto Lingüístico is also concerned with the entire man, his health, his living conditions, and his relationship to the rest of the country he often does not know exists. The Instituto explicitly sees the schools as a means of acculturation, although to them it is not the most important function.(12)

We see then that a statement of the problem as "Which type of school is most educationally efficient?" cannot be dealt with without taking into account the complex situation which led to the existence of the two types of schools.

The Ministerio would consider the school most efficient which most thoroughly Hispanicized the student, the Instituto would favor that school which led to the internalization of values embodied in the beliefs professed by the Instituto members, while I, the TESOL teacher, would look for language proficiency.

Looking at the problem of the relative learning efficiency of the two types of schools, we find that it is difficult to obtain any statistically reliable data for the following reasons: (1) The possibility of establishing any control groups in the rural jungle area is remote because of the inaccessability of the terrain as well as the lack of resources and interest. (2) A comparison with national norms, invalid as such a comparison would be, is not possible since Peru does not have nationwide standardized tests. (3) The Ministerio de Educación has shown little interest in evaluation, probably for three main reasons. The Hispanic cultural attitude is not favorable to empirical research, the epistemological approach reflecting the authoritative and traditional structuring of society. It is doubtful that the Ministerio in a country where the Catholic Church is the state religion cares to give high visability to the efforts of a Protestant missionary group in an area where the Ministerio has previously failed to establish any schools. A primary function of the schools in the jungle as perceived by the Ministerio, namely that of political socialization, is at present reasonably well fulfilled.(5) The tribes are becoming aware of the existence of Peru and their obligations to the country and sufficiently literate to carry out orders issued from Lima. (It was no later than the 1940's that there was a shooting war with Ecuador in this border area.) The Ministerio is not interested in any further educational efficiency, especially in light of the impoverished and near total lack of development in the jungle.

The bilingual schools for the Quechua-speaking children of the Sierra also present many obstacles to objective evaluation. However, there is pending a decision by the Ministerio de Educación to extend the program of the experimental schools to other parts of the Sierra with similar problems of isolated monolingual groups. This necessarily has stirred an interest in evaluation, and the Instituto Lingüístico has made some attempts at comparisons with the monolingual Spanish schools in the same zone.

Dr. Donald Burns, director of the Instituto's Ayacucho center and professor of linguistics at the University of Huamanga, reports the following findings for his program: (2, pp. 108-109) Students transferred to second grade of monolingual schools before the end of their three-year bilingual schooling were capable of doing the work in reading, penmanship, nature study and civic education, moral and religious education, and language (i.e. Spanish). In some cases students placed as high as fourth and fifth grade. These conclusions were based on final examinations, December, 1967. The most difficult course for students and teachers alike is Oral Spanish. Without increased contact with the Spanish-speaking community, the students will not learn to speak fluent Spanish in the artificial surroundings of the classroom, says Dr. Burns. However, the proficiency in Spanish after three years of bilingual education is definitely higher than that of students with three years of schooling in the regular schools. In this instance, the conclusion is not

documented. In a recent conversation, Dr. Burns has also commented that absenteeism and the drop-out rate are lower for the bilingual schools. In a report on educational materials, Nadine Burns comments: "All [students who have transferred from the bilingual schools to the common school system] we have been able to follow up on are doing above average work in their schools and are changing their teachers' ideas about the effectiveness of teaching Quechua speakers in their own mother tongue." (3, p.4)

Although it is not possible at this point to say whether the bilingual schools are more efficient in language teaching, there are several conclusions we might draw from a study of this problem.

It cannot be said often enough that language does not exist in a vacuum but is an integral part of a specific culture from which it cannot be separated. Language learning is not merely acquiring a new skill, but it is also learning to "accept" the culture of that language.

Speaking from personal experience, for a Swede who by necessity learns English as the lengua franca of Europe, the experience is not very threatening. He has a perfectly good language and culture of his own, he considers himself fully equal to anything English or American, and more importantly, he expects this to be the mutual viewpiont. But consider the learning of English by the Amerindian and the Puerto Rican. Consider the learning of French by the Moroccan and of English

by the Sikh in India's Punjab area, as well as the learning of standard American English by the speaker of a substandard dialect. The very fact that he is pressured into accepting another culture and its medium of expression is likely to seem a derogatory comment on his own culture. The point I am making is that foreign language learning and second language learning may be a much more dissimilar psychological experience than we have previously supposed it to be. We need to consider more carefully the socio-psychological importance of language as the reflection of the peer group in societies which have sub- and superordinate cultures, and we need to do this in a systematic way.

There are at least two requirements for this. One is the urgent importance for the linguist and the language teacher to work closely with the other social scientists. The language teacher cannot be expected to be trained in anthropology and sociology, economics and political science. But it should be clear from considering the teaching of Spanish in Peru that the problem of the educational efficiency of the bilingual schools as compared to the monolingual schools is rendered relatively meaningless unless one understands the cultural, i.e. the social, economic, and political background in which the schools operate. The language teacher needs the various interpretations of his specific problems that the other social scientists can contribute, and it should be commonplace to say so.

The other requirement is that of evaluational research. I join Eugene Brière, Gerald Dykstra and others in pointing out the need for more formal experimentation and evaluation of methods of teaching English as a foreign language. If Burns' findings that Spanish is better taught in Quechua than in Spanish prove to be accurate, as Nancy Modiano's (6) work in Mexico would seem to corroborate, it may well be that some of our experimental findings for teaching English as a foreign language do not hold true for teaching English as a second language. In which case, maybe we should teach English in Spanish and Navajo if it is language proficiency we want. But certainly here is a field that well bears looking into.

LIST OF REFERENCES

(1) Bebbington, Peter C. "Yarinacocha," reprinted from Peruvian Times (Lima, Peru) n.d.

(2) Burns, Donald. "Niños de la sierra peruana estudian en quechua para saber español," Annuario Indigenista, XXVII (December 1968), 105-110.

(3) Burns, Nadine. "Report on Education Materials Used in Bilingual Schools of Ayacucho." November 1968. (Mimeographed.)

(4) Charles, Carol. "Instituto Lingüístico de Verano at Yarinacocha." Report to Teachers College, Columbia University Team, Agency for International Development, Ministerio de Educación Pública, Lima, Peru, March 29, 1967. (Dittoed.)

(5) Mendoza, Samuel R. "El Instituto Lingüístico de Verano: Aglutinante Nacional," reprinted from Revista Militar del Perú (September-October 1966).

(6) Modiano, Nancy D. "Reading Comprehension in the National Language: A Comparative Study of Bilingual and All-Spanish Approaches to Reading Instruction in Selected Indian Schools in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1966.

(7) Patch, Richard W. "La Parada, Lima's Market: Serrano and Criollo, the Confusion of Race with Class," AUFSR, West Coast South America Series, XIV, No. 2, (February 1967).

(8) Personal interviews with staff members of the Ministerio de Educación Pública and of the Instituto Lingüístico at Yarinacocha, January 1968. See also Ministerio de Educación Pública, Sistema de Educación Bilingüe de la Selva. Lima, Peru: 1967 and Mary Ruth Wise, "Utilizing Languages of Minority Groups in a Bilingual Experiment in the Amazonian Jungle of Peru." Summer Institute of Linguistics, Yarinacocha, Peru, n.d. (Mimeographed.)

(9) Paulston, Rolland G. "Social Stratification and Educational Organization in Peru." Paper presented at the conference on Power Policy and Education, SUNY, Albany, November 16, 1968.

(10) Paulston, Rolland G. Society, Schools, and Progress in Peru. Oxford: Pergamon Press, forthcoming.

(11) Peru. VI Censo Nacional de Población: 1966. Idiomas, Alfabetismo, Asistencia Escolar, Nivel de Educación, Vol. III.

(12) Solnit, Albert J. Bilingual Education and Community Development. Lima: Summer Institute of Linguistics and Ministry of Public Education, 1968.

(13) Townsend, William C., founder of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, as quoted by Samuel Mendoza in "El Instituto Lingüístico de Verano," reprinted from Revista Militar del Perú (September-October 1966), 5.